

Congressman Mike Pence gave a speech today on the House floor supporting the DC Voting Rights Act. A compliment to Congressman Pence's speech, former Congressman and Vice Presidential nominee Jack Kemp authored an op-ed expressing the need for Republicans to support DC Voting Rights [here](#).

The following is the transcript of the speech given by Congressman Mike Pence today:

*Mr. Speaker, I come before the House today to express my support for H.R. 1905, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007, a bill which grants the people of the District of Columbia the right to full voting representation in the "People's House" I believe this legislation is a constitutional remedy to a historic wrong.*

*The fact that more than half a million Americans living in the District of Columbia are denied a single voting representative in Congress is clearly a historic wrong. The single, over-arching principle of the American founding was that laws should be based upon the consent of the governed. The first generation of Americans threw tea in Boston harbor because they were denied a voting representative in the national legislature in England. Give their fealty to representative democracy, it is inconceivable to me that our Founders would have been willing to accept the denial of representation to so great a throng of Americans in perpetuity.*

*But the demands of justice are not enough for Congress to act. A republic may only take that action which is authorized by the written Constitution.*

*In this regard, I believe that H.R. 1905 is constitutional. And I am not alone in this view. In support of this legislation, Judge Kenneth Starr, former independent counsel and U.S. Solicitor General observed, "There is nothing in our Constitution's history or its fundamental principles suggesting that the framers intend to deny the precious right to vote to those who live in the capitol of the great democracy they founded.*

*Opponents of the D.C. House Voting Rights Act understandably cite the plain language of Article I of the Constitution that the House of Representatives be comprised of representatives elected by "the people of the several states." If this were the only reference to the powers associated with the federal city, it would be most persuasive, but it is not. Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 provides, "The Congress shall have power...to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever" over the District of Columbia.*

*Justice Antonin Scalia observed in 1984, the Seat of the Government Clause, gives Congress "extraordinary and plenary" power over our nation's capitol. Scalia added that this provision of the Constitution "enables Congress to do many things in the District of Columbia which it has no authority to do in the 50 states...There has never been any rule of law that Congress must treat people in the District of Columbia exactly the same as people are treated in various states." United States v. Cohen, 733 F.2d 128, 140 (D.C. Cir. 1984).*

*And Congress has used this power to remedy the rights of Americans in the District of Columbia in the past. In 1949, the Supreme Court upheld legislation that extended access to the federal courts even though Article III expressly limited jurisdiction of the federal courts to suits brought*

*by citizens of different states. As Judge Starr observed, “the logic of this case applies here, and supports Congress’s determination to give the right to vote for a representative to citizens of District of Columbia.”*

*None of which argues for the District of Columbia ever to be granted the right to elect members of the United States Senate. In the most profound sense, from the inception of our nation, the House of Representatives was an extension of the people. I believe our founders left us the tools in the Constitution to ensure that all the American people have a voice in the people's house.*

*The Senate, from the inception of our nation, was an extension of the states. Senators were appointed by state legislatures until 1915. The Senate was and remains the expression of the principle of federalism in the national legislature and should ever be so. If the people of the District of Columbia would like two seats in the United States Senate, they will have to become a state.*

*I believe that justice demands we right this historic wrong. All of the American people should have representation in the people’s house. And I believe humility demands that we do so in a manner consistent with our constitution. The D.C. House Voting Rights Act meets this test and I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to play some small role in leading our constitutional republic ever closer to a more perfect union.*